

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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DRAFTED BY:EUR/CE:DANDERSON:RF

APPROVED BY:C - MR. SONNENFELDT

EUR-MR. HARTMAN

S/S-MR. KUCHEL

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R 081818Z MAY 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 112553

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW, US

SUBJECT: CDU LEADER KOHL'S VISIT TO US

REF: BONN 7321 (NOTAL)

1. CDU LEADER HELMUT KOHL CONSIDERED HIS MAY 2-6 VISIT TO
THE US EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL, JUDGING FROM HIS REACTIONS HERE
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AND FROM FRG EMBASSY COMMENTS TO US. KOHL HAD A CROWDED

SCHEDULE. HE SAW THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARIES SIMON, BUTZ, AND RUMSFELD, SEVERAL SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN AND OTHER TOP POLICY-MAKERS AND OPINION-MOLDERS.

2. AS BONN PREDICTED (REFTEL), KOHL EXUDED OPTIMISM ABOUT HIS ELECTORAL PROSPECTS IN OCTOBER. HE DID NOT DWELL ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS FUTURE BUT IT WAS CLEAR FROM HIS BEHAVIOR ADD ATTITUDE THAT HE FEELS THINGS ARE GOING HIS WAY IN THE FRG. HIS PRINCIPAL AIDES TRAVELLING WITH HIM OPENLY EXPRESSED THIS VIEW.

3. KOHL APPEARS TO HAVE MATURED CONSIDERABLY IN THE 18 MONTHS SINCE HIS LAST VISIT HERE. HE IS MORE POISED, MORE WITTY AND AT EASE, EVEN IN LARGER GROUPS, AND MORE CONFIDENT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS OF POLITICAL SUBSTANCE. HIS ONE DRAWBACK CONTINUES TO BE HIS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH BUT THIS WAS OFFSET ON THIS VISIT BY THE PRESENCE OF A VERY CAPABLE GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE INTERPRETER.

4. IN HIS HOUR-LONG TALK WITH COUNSELOR SONNENFELDT AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN ON MAY 5, KOHL DISCUSSED AT LENGTH THE CDU'S TIES TO OTHER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IN EUROPE. HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE ITALIAN DC'S PROSPECTS AND OFFERED LITTLE HOPE OF THE EUROPEAN LEADERS BEING ABLE TO APPLY ANY PRESSURE ON THE DC PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS THAT WOULD ALTER THE PRESENT BLEAK SITUATION. HE SAID THAT CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S RECENT CRITICISM OF THE ITALIANS HAD OFFENDED ITALIAN PRIDE AND MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR SCHMIDT, WHO HAD EARLIER HAD A GOOD IMAGE IN ITALY, TO PLAY ANY USEFUL ROLE THERE NOW. THIS WAS KOHL'S ONLY CRITICISM OF SCHMIDT IN THE MEETING AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT. HOWEVER, KOHL'S AIDES PRIVATELY SAID THAT SCHMIDT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD KOHL AND HIS PUBLIC ATTACKS, ESPECIALLY IN BUNDESTAG DEBATES, HAD MADE ANY QUIET COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO MEN IMPOSSIBLE. THERE WAS A STRONG ELEMENT OF BITTERNESS IN THE AIDES' REMARKS.

5. SONNENFELDT AND HARTMAN BOTH EXPRESSED THEIR STRONG HOPE THAT BERLIN WOULD NOT BECOME A CAMPAIGN ISSUE, CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULARLY THE MATTER OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION. (FYI. WE HAD LEARNED FROM A GERMAN JOURNALIST ACCOMPANYING KOHL THAT THE CDU LEADER DID IN FACT INTEND TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON BERLIN AND THE FOUNDATION IN HIS CAMPAIGN BUT ALSO WANTED TO HEAR US VIEWS BEFORE DECIDING HOW TO HANDLE THE ISSUES. END FYI.) KOHL NOT ONLY AVOIDED GIVING ANY COMMITMENT TO STAY AWAY FROM BERLIN AND BERLIN-RELATED ISSUE IN HIS CAMPAIGN: HE SPECIFICALLY SAID THAT

BERLIN HAD SERIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MORALE PROBLEMS AND THAT THESE COULD NOT BE IGNORED IN A CAMPAIGN. HE ADDED, CONCERNING THE FOUNDATION, THAT THE PROBLEM HAD NOT BEEN CDU-CREATED BUT HAD RESULTED FROM A SCHMIDT-SCHUETZ

DISPUTE. HE SAID THAT HE COULD HARDLY AVOID TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THAT DEVELOPMENT.

6. KOHL DID SAY THAT HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN DOING ANYTHING DEMONSTRATIVE IN BERLIN BUT AGAIN STRESSED THAT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE CITY, INCLUDING THE PROBLEMS OF AN AGING POPULATION AND THE DEPARTURE FROM THE CITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES, HAD TO BE FACED SQUARELY. SONNENFELDT AND HARTMAN WARNED THAT BERLIN ISSUES WERE BEST SOLVED QUIETLY AND AWAY FROM A PARTISAN ATMOSPHERE. KOHL TOOK THE POINT BUT CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM AGREEING WITH IT.

7. COMMENT. KOHL NOW KNOWS OUR CONCERNS ABOUT MAKING THE FOUNDATION AN ELECTION ISSUE BUT IT IS FAR FROM CLEAR THAT HE WILL TAKE THEM VERY HEAVILY INTO ACCOUNT AS THE CAMPAIGN HEATS UP. ANYTHING THE AMBASSADOR CAN DO TO REINFORCE THE US VIEWS IN HIS TALKS WITH KOHL WOULD BE USEFUL. KISSINGER

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